DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 021 906 UD 004 525

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IDENTIFICATION OF THE EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED.

New York State Education Dept., Albany.
Pub Date Oct 65
Note- 19p.
EDRS Price MF- $0.25 HC- $0.84
Descriptors- ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AGE, CRITERIA, *DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, FEDERAL PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES, HEALTH, *IDENTIFICATION, *INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, INTELLIGENCE, LANGUAGE ABILITY, PARENTAL BACKGROUND, READING LEVEL, SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS, SOCIAL INFLUENCES, STANDARDIZED TESTS, *STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS, TEACHER ROLE
Identifiers- Esea Title 1, New York

This report describes the criteria by which local educational agencies in New York State might identify disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for assistance under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Disadvantaged pupils can be identified by their mental ability, language ability, academic achievement, reading level, age-grade level, physical condition, and parents' occupation and education. The importance of teachers' judgments in designating disadvantaged pupils and of social and cultural influences on the disadvantaged child are stressed. (LB)

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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# Identification of the Educationally Disadvantaged

UD 004 525
ED021906

Office of Coordinator, Title I
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

October 1965

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## Foreword

The basis for the determination of allocations to local educational agencies of funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is economic deprivation arrived at by using Bureau of Census data of 1960 and data concerning aid to families with dependent children (AFDC) under Title IV of the Social Security Act. The basis for planning programs and services utilizing these funds is educationally disadvantagement, especially where the educationally deprived children reside in attendance areas where low-income families are concentrated.

This publication, prepared by Dr. Irving Ratchick, Department Coordinator of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, is designed to assist local educational agencies in the identification of the educationally disadvantaged. Additional copies may be secured by writing directly to him.

A variety of criteria are presented; some are quantitative in nature, others qualitative. Each local educational agency should consider to what extent the suggested criteria can be supplemented by additional criteria appropriate to the uniqueness of the local educational agency.

The passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is a major step in raising the sights of the educationally deprived, and offers new horizons, aspirations, and motivations. The opportunity to eliminate educational disadvantagement has been given to us; let us make the most of it.

Walter Cronson

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED

"Sec. 201", of the Declaration of Policy of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 indicates the intent of Congress to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children of low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children.

Once the attendance areas and the schools have been selected on the basis of concentrations of low-income families, educational deprivation factors will determine which students can participate in the programs.

The U.S. Office of Education in its pamphlet, School Programs for Educationally Deprived Children, states it thusly:

> "Educationally deprived children are children whose educational achievement is below that normally expected of children of their age and grade, including children who are handicapped because of physical, mental, or emotional impairment."

Priority for projects will be given to the educationally disadvantaged from areas with concentrations of children of low-income families, but other educationally disadvantaged pupils also can be served by Title I projects. For example, if a project were related to the improvement of reading for educationally disadvantaged pupils, then all pupils who were in a specific attendance area and who needed such help could participate in the reading program. Income would not be a factor. Moreover, other pupils who needed help in reading and who lived

outside the attendance area could also participate provided there was room for them. However, by what methods do you determine whether a pupil is educationally disadvantaged? Is it by data from standardized tests? By teachers' observations and recommendations? By appearance? By parental occupation, or is it by a combination of any of these or other factors? Educational disadvantagement goes hand in hand with cultural disadvantagement. The basic component in the elimination of educational disadvantagement is an understanding of the nature and needs of culturally disadvantaged children.

In the Hearings before the Subcommittee on Education of the United States Senate, there is incorporated in the testimony offered by the Office of Education the following:

Characteristics of culturally disadvantaged children.[1]

"As the teacher sees the culturally disadvantaged child in her classroom, she may note these characteristics:

Lack of response to conventional classroom approaches.

Inadequate performance in communication skills.

Socially unacceptable behavior.

Indifference to responsibility.

Nonpurposeful activity.

Physical defects and poor health habits.

Exaggerated importance of status symbols.

Further study for the child reveals that —

He is overage for his grade . . . . . .

His school attendance is poor . . . . . .

[1]Statement of Frederick Bertolaet, Secretary, the Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement in Hearings, Subcommittee on Education of the United States Senate, Eighty-Ninth Congress. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Part 2, p. 1194.

He has a high rate of failure. . . . . .

He has a high dropout rate. . . . . ..

His aspiration level is low. . . . . .

He is without kindergarten experience. . . . . .

He has low achievement in reading

and arithmetic . . . . . ..

His participation in cultural activities

is negligible . . . . . .

His potential appears to exceed what

test data show. . . . . .

Supplementing this information is the series of statements about their needs:[2]

Culturally disadvantaged children need —

Improved skills in reading, arithmetic, and in other academic areas.

Knowledge concerning living in the urban community.

Experiential backgrounds that will motivate learning.

Speech in conformity with patterns of standard English.

Heightened aspirations and motivation for the achievement of potential capacity and a willingness to initiate self-improvement.

Understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities of the prevailing urban culture.

Understanding of the purposes of education.

Teachers with understanding of pupils' background and problems.

Parents who are positively oriented towards education and the school.

[2]Ibid - p. 1196

A community that reinforces the positive influences of the school.

Physical examination and referral for remediation of defects.

Opportunities for achieving recognition, security, and a sense of belonging - better self-image.

In a recent publication, Guidance for Educationally Disadvantaged Pupils[3] characteristics given about the disadvantaged child in school support the previous testimony:

- He has an inadequate self-image.
- He is one or more years behind his age group in school.
- He is frequently tardy, absent or truant.
- He is unable to communicate adequately either in writing or in speaking in order to achieve school success.
- He is retarded in reading.
- He has a lack of knowledge of or feeling for school routine.
- He generally performs poorly on tests.
- He appears to be a slow learner or is an underachiever.
- He is hostile to authority.
- He is apathetic or indifferent toward school.
- He fails to do homework assignments regularly.
- He has an anti-intellectual attitude.
- He has limited or unrealistic aspirations and long-term goals.
- He does not participate in extra-curricular activities, with some outstanding exceptions (frequently in sports) to the contrary.
- His parents often appear disinterested in school and do not come to school-related functions unless sent for.

[3]The State Education Department, Bureau of Guidance, Guidance for Educationally Disadvantaged Pupils' Albany, 1965, pp. 3,4.

Criteria which can be helpful in the identification of the educationally disadvantaged may be considered under two general headings: (1) quantitative and (2) qualitative. Quantitative data would include such items as the results of mental ability tests, achievement test data, including scores in reading and other tool subjects and in State-wide tests, school --grade and age comparisons, pupil personnel services information and health status and handicaps. Qualitative data would include social and cultural factors, teacher observations and judgments, other staff and community agency evaluations, results of surveys such as that of parents' occupations, employment status, attitudes, education, and additional findings of research pertaining to cultural and educational disadvantagement.

## I QUANTITATIVE CRITERIA

### A. Mental Ability

Intelligence scores are affected by a number of factors including the cultural content of the test and environmental experiences.

The studies of intelligence indicate that intelligence test results are modified by school, home environment and cultural and environmental experiences. The measured mental ability of educationally disadvantaged pupils does not necessarily reflect a ceiling level, but does to a marked degree represent basically the experiential background of environmental conditions, particularly in the home and local community.

Careful study should be given in working with pupils of apparent below average mental ability to determine to what degree the results of the mental ability tests represent their potential or represent how they are functioning at the time of testing with consideration of factors affecting performance on the tests. It is recognized that apparent low mental ability may be largely attributable to cultural and educational disadvantagement.

B. Achievement Data

(1) Reading Level

The primary criterion in considering educational disadvantagement is the reading level. Since reading is basic to school progress a pupil markedly below reading level for his grade can be considered educationally disadvantaged.

Since pupils develop at different rates, consideration of educational retardation in reading of below grade level of two years or more in the intermediate grades (4-6) can be used as a realistic guide, particularly when a higher capacity or potential is indicated by other data. Likewise, the majority of students below the 30th percentile according to State or national norms depending upon the test, can be considered educationally disadvantaged. In the primary grades (1-3) educational retardation as below grade level may be part of educational disadvantagement, may be associated with late maturation in development, or an indication of limited capacity. Children differ in their readiness for reading and in their acquisition of skills and attitudes necessary in the development of reading. Some children may be "late bloomers" and do not come into their own until a specific stage of physical development has been reached.

With regard to test results generally, since there is a difference between national, state and local norms, careful study should be given to the interpretation of the test results as they apply to the local school.

It has been pointed out repeatedly that background experience is a contributing factor to reading progress. Rich background experience and the development of speech and vocabulary patterns are essential in providing the proper motivation for reading. It is acknowledged readily that the economically and educationally deprived do not have the opportunities to acquire this essential background and, therefore, an enriched cultural environment is significant in

preparation for reading and in school progress. Operation Headstart programs for pre-kindergarten children under the Economic Opportunity Act are related to this concept.

An important relevant consideration is that children who are markedly below their reading grade level and are not functioning in accordance with their capacity and who have reading disabilities may be educationally disadvantaged. They may be educationally disadvantaged because of additional factors including emotional maladjustment, unsatisfactory school experiences, poor health and delayed physical development.

(2) Underachievement

Underachievement, a major concern in education, is considered generally a disparity between the normal expectancy indicated for age and grade and performance and achievement. This underachievement is related to the expected performance based upon the results of mental ability and other standardized tests and actual performance at a lower level as indicated by grades and attitudes. A pupil can be considered educationally disadvantaged if there is a marked discrepancy between achievement and capacity, between the normal expectancy and performance or between age and performance.

Underachievement is a key to educational disadvantagement particularly when the disadvantagement may be due to multiple causes such as low socio-economic status of the family, segregated housing, frequent change of residence, limited cultural opportunities, special problems in the home, negative parental attitudes toward school and education, limited school experiences, low capacity, poor-self image, hostility to school and authority, emotional problems, unsatisfactory attendance and poor health.

A standard to be considered in identifying underachievement is the relationship between the results of ratings on the scholastic aptitude and achievement

tests. If the percentile rank on the scholastic aptitude test is markedly higher than the percentile rank on the achievement test, then the pupil can be considered an underachiever. For example one pupil's score on a scholastic aptitude test may place him at the 80th percentile while his score on the achievement test placed him at the 55th percentile. Another pupil may have a score on the scholastic aptitude test which placed him at the 75th percentile while his score on the achievement test placed him at the 50th percentile. A difference of 25 percentile points between the percentile ratings as given in the examples can be a general gauge. However, the standards for underachievement in one school may differ from the standards in another school based upon the nature of the student body, staff, resources and facilities available. Moreover, since the primary focus of the Act is serving areas with concentrations of children of low-income families, emphasis on eliminating underachievement stemming from the causes cited previously should be given the highest priority.

(3) Language Arts

In the culturally disadvantaged home language usage is more limited than in the middle-income home. More emphasis in the culturally deprived home is given to gestures and other non-verbal means of communication. Weakness in the language arts which comprises a number of communication activities such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading, the development of skills including vocabulary, spelling, grammatical usage, and adequate auditory and visual discrimination may be indicative of educational disadvantagement.

Reissman[4] has stated that there are many questions still to be answered about the verbal potential of disadvantaged children. "Under what conditions

[4]Reissman, F. The Culturally Deprived Child: A New View, Address Conference on Education of Disadvantaged Children, Office of Education, Washington, D.C. May 1962.

are they verbal? What kind of stimuli do they respond to verbally? With whom are they verbal? What do they talk about?

(4) State Tests

The standardized tests which the Department offers in elementary and secondary schools, including tests of scholastic ability, achievement, and minimum competence tests in reading and arithmetic, provide baseline data and can identify educational disadvantagement.

The proposed testing program which the Department is recommending includes reading and number readiness tests for grade 1, elementary school reading and arithmetic tests for grades 3 and 6, minimum competence reading and arithmetic tests for grade 9, and the Regents Scholarship Examination for grade 12 to be applied to those students who normally take Regents Scholarship Examinations.

As indicated under Reading Level where percentiles are used, the majority of pupils below the 30th percentile for practical purposes can be considered educationally disadvantaged. Some pupils may be performing at their maximum potential or close to it, but most of them who are educationally disadvantaged will be functioning below their capacity. If however, grade level status is used as a basis then two years or more below grade level for grades 6 and 9 can be deemed educational disadvantagement. In the lower grades 1 and 3, however, this classification must be evaluated differently in view of the nature of the development of children especially in the primary grades. Treating the results of other tests such as in science and social studies in a similar manner would help identify educational disadvantagement.

(5) School -- Grade and Age Comparisons

Dropout studies have indicated that failure in school, repeating grades and over-age are important factors and representative of educational disadvantagement. A pupil who is two years or more below his grade level can

be considered educationally disadvantaged.

Potential factors for dropping out of school taken from the report, Reducing the School Dropout Rate - A Report on the Holding Power Project[5] include age, physical size, health, participation in school and out-of-school activities, grade retardation, father's occupation, educational level achievement of the father and mother, number of children in family, school-to-school transfers, attendance, learning rate (intelligence test marks), ability to read, and school marks. Other items considered in a summary of opinions by teachers include reactions to school controls, acceptance by pupils, parental attitude towards graduation, pupil's interest in school work and general adjustment.

(6) Health Conditions and Handicaps

Prerequisite to learning is the satisfaction of basic needs. The availability of food, sunshine, clothing and proper living conditions are the essentials of providing opportunities for learning. Generally, poor health, undernourishment, diet deficiencies, dental, hearing, speech and vision defects are debilitating in their nature in providing a proper climate and motivation for learning.

There is a preponderance of data which indicates close relationships between reading development and physical fitness and health. Performance on physical fitness scales should provide invaluable clues. Physical examinations and recommendations for remediation of health defects are important.

Particularly important is the identification of speech defects. It should not be inferred that a speech defect is necessarily a cause of educational disadvantagement, but it has been pointed out in a number of studies of school children in general, children with defective speech do not progress as well educationally

[5]The State Education Department, Bureau of Guidance, Reducing the School Dropout Rate - A Report on the Holding Power Project, Albany, July, 1963.

as do children with normal speech. It has been indicated that the seriously speech handicapped child upon reaching the eighth grade level can be academically retarded by approximately one full year. Furthermore it has been estimated that a high school graduate who is seriously speech handicapped would have an earning power of approximately 25% less than his articulate counterpart. Studies have also indicated that speech and reading disabilities are to a substantial degree associated. Particularly this is true when oral reading is involved. The use of vocabulary and oral tests is most desirable in identifying deterrent factors to learning.

There are children and youth designated as either physically, mentally and emotionally handicapped. Concomitant with the identification of the handicap itself is the need to provide essential experiences and to determine the special programs, services, resources, and facilities necessary in order to eliminate educational disadvantagement.

## II QUALITATIVE CRITERIA

### A. Social and Cultural Aspects

Social and cultural influence of the home have a marked influence upon the progress of a child in school. Bienenstok and Sayres[6] have researched the social and cultural aspects of school achievement and the following few statements from studies cited in the publication indicate clearly present issues and concerns and future challenges and responsibilities.

"Study after study has shown the same pattern: Pupils from lower status families do not do as well or go as far in school as those from higher status families." (page 17)

[6]Bienenstok, T. and Sayres, W.C. Contributions of Sociology and Anthropology to Education. The State Education Department, Division of Research, Albany, New York, April, 1962.

"These statistics indicate that as a boy passes through the educational sifting process, his parents status assumes increasing importance, both absolutely and in comparison with his own intelligence, as a factor influencing his chances of continuing his preparation for one of the more advantageous vocations." (page 19)

"The values of a group occupying a particular socio-economic status shape the role behavior and attitudes of group members. For lower - status groups, education provides a means by which their children can rise in the socioeconomic scale; at the same time, such a rise requires the pursuit of a status and role which are out of place at home." (page 23)

"Each child brings to school a collection of values, beliefs, and attitudes acquired in the home and reflecting the orientation toward education of the socio-economic or cultural group to which his family belongs." (page 53)

"Motivational techniques must be not only psychologically but culturally appropriate." (page 55)

The Department under its program, Project ABLE,[7] has encouraged school districts to conduct demonstration projects to help culturally disadvantaged pupils. In the report, which describes ABLE activities in sixteen school districts during their second year of participation, it is pointed out in the Summary that "project pupils tend to be drawn from school populations marked by the low socioeconomic status of their parents, residence in inferior housing, and low academic achievement." (page 23)

B. Teacher Observations and Judgments

The classroom teacher, particularly by observations of pupils and a knowledge of the family background and home, can designate pupils who are educationally disadvantaged. Other staff besides the classroom teacher who have much to contribute in identifying pupils' needs include pupil personnel workers

[7]The State Education Department, Bureau of Guidance, Helping Educationally Disadvantaged Children. The Second Year of Project ABLE, Albany, 1964.

(attendance, guidance, health, school psychology and school social work). Moreover, community agencies can contribute effectively in supplementing information obtained by the school and in developing programs to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged. It is essential that the resources of the community, public and private alike, be used maximally.

The classroom teacher who has daily contact with pupils has many opportunities to learn about them including their strengths, weaknesses, abilities, aptitudes, interests, attitudes, and their potential. Observing pupils as they participate in classroom activities: on committees, in special projects and in creative work, or in recreation programs both in and out of school can provide important clues in learning about pupils. Visits to the home, seeing the setting of the home, learning about the background of a pupil, his childhood history, medical history, special problems, interests, composition of the family, relationships with siblings and parents and finding out about parents attitudes and aspirations, can assist immeasurably in helping to meet the needs of pupils. These visits to the homes as well as parent-teacher conferences, both planned and informal, provide opportunities for teachers and parents to work together for the purpose of eliminating educational disadvantagement.

It is well recognized that problems of low income associated with poverty pockets such as inadequate housing, unemployment, poor health, and limited financial resources for cultural experiences leave their mark on the self-concept of pupils and parents alike including their aspirations and attitudes. As Melby[8] has stated "Since the child lives in home and community more than in school, parental and family as well as total community life influence the child."

[8] Melby, E.O. The Community School and Its Administration. Needed: A New Concept of Educational Administration. Address: Delivered at Southern Illinois University, July 1965.

C. Parents' Occupation and Education

It has long been recognized that the parents' occupation and educational background provide motivation and aspirations for children and youth. In a recent study[9] conducted by the New York Office of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor, it was pointed out that from reports of approximately 3,000,000 out-of-school youth ages 16 to 21 who had less than 4 years of high school, 78.1% of the educational attainment reported by the youth about their parents' education indicated that neither parent completed 4 years of high school. This is compared to 47.2% where youth had completed 4 years of high school or more. For non-white the comparable figures are 81.5% and 55.9% respectively. Data also indicate that unemployment rates are higher for non-white workers regardless of occupation.

Information given at the aforementioned Hearings of the Subcommittee on Education, United States Senate[10] indicated a relationship between the levels of schooling and income under $2,000 contrasted with those of all families in the United States.

Table 9. Relationship, level of schooling and family income, United States

(In Percent)

| Level of Schooling | Income under $2,000 | All Families |
|---|---|---|
| Elementary | | |
| Less than 8 years . . . . . | 42 | 16 |
| 8 years . . . . . | 24 | 18 |
| High School: | | |
| 1 to 3 years . . . . . | 15 | 18 |
| 4 years . . . . . | 12 | 27 |
| College: . . . . . | 7 | 21 |

Source: Census P 60, No. 43, p. 26, table 8.

[9]New York Office of Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor, Some Facts Relating to: National Economic and Manpower Policy. July, 1965 p. 10

[10]Loc. cit. p. 633.

This concept is reinforced over and over by studies which indicate that culturally disadvantaged students have lower occupational and educational aspirations than do upper-status students.

In the report entitled The Assessment of School Quality,[11] a Summary of the Quality Measurement Project, which involved 97 school systems, it is pointed out that the education and occupational scale of parents are reflected in pupils' attitudes toward school and in their educational motivation and aspirations. There was also confirmed the usefulness of an index of socio-economic status for classifying pupils according to educative potential.

Although collectively both parents may influence their children in their attitudes toward school, including motivation, aspirations and future goals, it is the occupational and educational status of the father which carries the greater weight.

Summary

The identification of the educationally disadvantaged necessitates the use of criteria which are both quantitative and qualitative. Progress in school, results of standardized tests and other measuring devices can provide concrete indicators. Examples include educational retardation of two years and more below grade level or placement at the 30th percentile or less in specific areas of achievement, especially reading, or two years or more overage for a grade. Health status and the type and severity of handicaps, physically, mentally and emotionally are significant. Teacher judgment is exceedingly important.

There is a high correlation between conditions of poverty, educational development and poor academic performance. Parental background and attitudes

[11] The State Education Department, The Assessment of School Quality, A Summary of the Quality Measurement Project. March 1959.

are reflected in the aspirations and motivation of children. A knowledge of the family and home is significant in supplementing information available to the school.

Implementing the mandate of Congress as intended in the Act, it is essential that all available resources, school, and home and community work together in identifying educational disadvantagement and in planning or developing programs to meet the special educational needs of educationally deprived children especially in areas of low income.